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ABSTRACT

This paper offers the definition of the term "special populations" that appears in Section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act of 1998: (1) individuals with disabilities; (2) individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children; (3) individuals preparing for nontraditional training and employment; (4) single parents, including single pregnant women; (5) displaced homemakers; and (6) individuals with other barriers to educational achievement, including individuals with limited English proficiency. The sheer magnitude of special populations in California's community colleges underscores their importance in the state's vocational education future. Current data on California's community college students indicate that there are 444,000 (34%) economically disadvantaged students; 211,000 (18%) single-parent students; 89,000 (7%) limited English proficiency students; and 55,000 (4%) disabled students. Women make up disproportionate percentages of several of the special populations categories, which both reflects and gives rise to continued segregation of occupations by sex. Women still make up 99% of secretaries, 97% of child-care workers, and 77% of cashiers, while they make up only 4% of aerospace engineers, 3% of firefighters, and 3% of CEOs, COOs, and presidents of Fortune 500 companies. This paper details the requirements of the act, including accountability requirements and state and local level requirements explicitly defined in the Perkins Law. (NB)

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Statewide Advisory Committee on Special Populations

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Report of the California Community College Special Populations Advisory Committee: *Recommendations for the State Plan for Vocational Education*

Introduction

The term "special populations" as defined in Section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act of 1998 means:

a. individuals with disabilities;
b. individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children
c. individuals preparing for nontraditional training and employment
d. single parents, including single pregnant women
e. displaced homemakers and
f. individuals with other barriers to educational achievement, including individuals with limited English proficiency.

The sheer magnitude of special populations in California's community colleges underscores their importance in the State's vocational education future. In the 1996-97 academic year, economically disadvantaged students comprised 34% of such enrollees (approximately 444,000 students), limited English proficient students 7% (89,000 students), and disabled students 4% (55,000 students). As self reported by students, there are over 211,000 single parent students in the California's Community Colleges. It would seem difficult indeed to develop a plan that is fair for the state without taking these disproportionately needy populations into consideration.

This paper makes recommendations for California's state plan for vocational education. The paper is organized in two sections. Part I presents background information including the definitions of special populations, legislative requirements, current enrollment statistics, and a brief summary of the barriers faced by special population groups. Part II presents recommendations for meeting the requirements of the

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law and overcoming barriers faced by special populations. Recommendations are in three parts: accountability, state activities, and local activities.

Part I. Background Information

Definitions of Special Populations

The following definitions are taken directly from Section 3 of the new Perkins Act:

The term **"individual with a disability"** means an individual with any disability (as defined in Section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102))

The term **"nontraditional training and employment"** means occupations or fields of work including careers in computer science, technology, and other emerging high skill occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work. This definition is based on employment statistics not on enrollment data. Also the addition of "computer science, technology and other emerging high skill occupations" has been added to the earlier Carl Perkins legislation definition of nontraditional occupations.

The term **"displaced homemaker"** means an individual who is in one of the following three categories: i) has worked primarily without remuneration to care for a home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills; ii) has been dependent on the income of another family member but is no longer supported by that income; or iii) is a parent whose youngest dependent child will become ineligible to receive assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et. seq.) not later than 2 years after the date on which the parent applied for assistance under this title. To qualify a displaced homemaker must also be unemployed or under employed and experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

The term **"individual with limited English proficiency"** means a secondary school student, an adult, or an out-of-school youth, who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language, and whose native language is a language other than English, or who lives in a family or community environment in which a language other than English is the dominant language.

While the new legislation does not specifically define "economically disadvantaged" and "single parent," the previous legislation provided these definitions: "The term **'economically disadvantaged family or individual'** means such families or individuals who are determined by the Secretary to be low-income according to the latest available data from the Department of Commerce." "The term **'single parent'** means an individual who is unmarried or legally separated from a spouse, and has a minor child or children from which the parent has either custody or joint custody; or is pregnant."

The Requirements of the Law

Accountability Requirements

Section 113 of the Act, Accountability, requires that each eligible agency shall identify in the State plan core indicators of performance that include:

> • *student participation in and completion of vocational and technical education programs that lead to nontraditional training and employment.*" (Sec. 113. b. 2 A iv)

The law also stipulates that the State shall prepare an annual report to the Secretary which includes:

> • *a quantifiable description of the progress special populations participating in vocational and technical education programs have made in meeting the State adjusted levels of performance established by the eligible agency.* (Sec 113. c. 2.)

State Level Requirements

A number of state level activities pertinent to serving special populations are explicitly defined in the new Perkins Law. These are:

Section 121, State Administration, states that the responsibility of an eligible agency under this title shall include:

> • *the evaluation of the programs, services, and activities assisted under this title, including preparation for nontraditional training and employment.* (SEC 121. 1. A)

Section 122, State Plan, stipulates that the state plan for vocational education shall include information that:

• *describes the eligible agency's program strategies for special populations.* (SEC 122. c.7)

• *describes how individuals who are members of special populations will be provided with equal access to activities assisted under this title, will not be discriminated against on the basis of their status as members of the special populations, and will be provided with programs designed to enable the special populations to meet or exceed State adjusted levels of performance and prepare special populations for further learning and for high skill, high wage careers.* (SEC 122 c. 8 A-C)

• *describes how funds will be used to promote preparation for nontraditional training and employment.* (SEC 122 c. 17)

Section 124, State Leadership Activities, stipulates that state leadership funds shall be used for:

• *an assessment of how the needs of special populations are being met and how such programs are designed to enable special populations to meet State adjusted levels of performance and prepare the special populations for further learning or for high skill, high wage careers.* (SEC 124. b. 1.)

• *providing preparation for nontraditional training and employment.* (SEC 124 b. 5)

• *support for programs for special populations that lead to high skill, high wage careers.* (SEC 124 b.8)

Local Level Requirements

Local level activities pertinent to serving special populations are also explicitly defined in the new Perkins Law.

Section 134, Local Plan for Vocational and Technical Education Program, states that the plan must:

• *describe how representatives of special populations (and others) are involved in the development, implementation, and evaluations of vocational and technical education programs assisted under this title.* (SEC 134 b 4)

• *adopt strategies to overcome barriers that result in lowering rates of access to or lowering success in programs for special populations.* (SEC 134. b. 7. A)

• *provide programs that are designed to enable the special populations to meet the State adjusted levels of performance.* (SEC 134. b. 7. B)

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• *describe how individuals who are members of special populations will not be discriminated against on the basis of their status as members of special populations.* (SEC 134. b. 8).

• *describe how funds will be used to promote preparation for nontraditional training and employment.* (SEC 134. b. 9)

Section 135, Local Uses of Funds, requires local agencies to:

• *develop and implement evaluations of the vocational and technical education programs carried out with funds under this title including an assessment of how the needs of special populations are being met.* (SEC 135 b 5)

• *provide students with experience in all aspects of the industry.* (SEC 135 b 2)

• *develop, improve or expand the use of technology.* (SEC 135 b 3)

• *provide professional development.* (SEC 135 b 4)

• *link secondary and post secondary programs.* (SEC 135 b 8).

Current Data on California's Community College Students

The individuals in special population groups make up a substantial proportion of vocational education enrollments. If these individuals are not served equitably, they will not have access to employment and economic equity. If the State is to assure that all Californians have the opportunity to be self-sufficient, pursue their career aspirations, and improve their quality of life, it cannot afford to allow educational and economic inequity to persist.

The percentage of vocational education students who identified themselves in the following special population categories is presented below. Since students can be enrolled in more than one program area, there is some duplication in the data. However, the self-report nature of the data may substantially understate their magnitude.

- economically disadvantaged - 444,000 students
- single parents - 211,000 students
- limited English proficient - 89,000 students
- disabled students - 55,000 students

Enrollment data for the community college system (the most recent are for the 1997-98 academic year) reveal a disproportionate enrollment by gender in the Taxonomy of Program (TOP) code areas. For example, while females make up 77% of the enrollments in Health (TOP Code area 12), they constitute only 13% of the enrollments in Engineering Technology (TOP Code area 09). While both these areas incorporate technological skill training, the engineering technology area leads to careers in more high wage, high skill occupations. The disproportionate enrollment seen in some 2-digit TOP code areas is even more evident when a detailed analysis of specific courses is undertaken. Such analysis generally shows that females are underrepresented in the specific courses which most frequently lead to higher wage, higher skill jobs, and over represented in courses leading to lower paid, lower skilled occupations.

There are also inequities in the median earnings of males and females who have completed vocational programs and are employed. As Table I on the next page indicates, for each level of educational attainment (12 to 23.99 units taken, 24+ units taken, Certificates, and AA or AS degrees) males earn more than females after three years in the labor market. Enrollment data suggest that this is in large measure due to the fields in which women are training. A greater emphasis on nontraditional high wage, high skill employment options for women will address this inequity.

Barriers Faced by Special Populations

While there is an emphasis on serving all populations equally in the new Perkins Act, when they are considered statistically, all populations are not equal. In the case of single parents, single pregnant women, displaced homemakers, and students pursuing nontraditional occupations, previous legislation recognized these differences through a series of set aside targeted funds. Current legislation no longer does so. While this is fair in theory, there is a danger that those most in need will be underserved in the evolving system.

Women make up disproportionate proportions of several of the special populations categories (i.e. single parents, displaced homemakers, and the economically disadvantaged). This both reflects and gives rise to continued segregation of occupations by sex. Women currently comprise[1]

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1 Statistics below come from a pamphlet entitled "Girls and Women Today." It was prepared by Project TEAM, Etna Union High School District, with support from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990. Data come from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Departments

- 99% of secretaries
- 97% of child-care workers
- 97% of early childhood teacher assistants
- 85% of legal assistants
- 77% of cashiers
- 76% of household servants
- 1% of airplane pilots
- 2% of electricians & plumbers

UI Wage Data Table

- 3% of firefighters
- 4% of aerospace engineers
- 9 % of all engineers
- 3% of CEOs, COOs, and presidents of Fortune 500 companies

Every occupation in the second half of this list provides higher wages than those in the first half, not to mention greater benefits and prestige. Women today earn on average 75% of the wages of men, although they have, on average, slightly more years of education. They work almost as much as men, a dramatic change from when "baby boomers" were growing up in the 50s and 60s. Women today make up 46% of the work force, and work on average 34 years outside the home. Seventy-five percent of divorced women are in the work force, as are 74% of *all* women between the ages of 25 and 54.

Women also dominate poverty statistics. Fifty-four percent of poor families are maintained by women alone.[2] Their plight is closely tied to that of children, who showed a 63% growth in poverty in the 20 years ending in 1995.[3] Statistically women are the largest "special population" in the state, comprising a slight majority. While not all of these statistics can be blamed on lack of fairness, many reflect historic, deep seated prejudices.

One of the best ways to bring fairness and equal opportunity is through education. Where employment is concerned, this is especially true of the vocational education system. Yet the vocational education system--which is largely controlled and funded by public entities--is subject to a political system which reflects the gender biases of the larger

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of Education, Labor (Bureau of Labor Statistics), and Commerce (Bureau of the Census); the National Commission on Working Women; Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University; and the Employment Standards Administration, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training.

[2] This figure comes from the "feminization of poverty" index maintained by Diana Pearce of Wider Opportunities for Women in Washington, 10.

[3] Report by the Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition, 1995.

society. While women make up 50% of government workers in the country, there are only three women governors, eight women attorney generals, and 12 women secretaries of state (see footnote 1). Women make of 9% of U. S. Senators, 12% of U.S. Representatives, and 20% of the mayors in the country. They lack sufficient voice in the very system that treats them inequitably.

Individuals with limited English proficiency are also an important subgroup within our state that need special help, particularly where vocational education is concerned. In California , Latinos now comprise approximately 40% of K-12 students.[4] Over 50 other languages are also represented in California's schools. While not all these students are limited in their English proficiency, more than a third of the state's children do not speak English as their first or home language. Most such youth do learn English, but over one in five of all K-12 California students is LEP. Of all students enrolled in California's community colleges during the 1996-97 school year, 7% (89,000) were of limited English proficiency.

Figures from the fall of 1998 show that 25% of California's community college students are identified as Hispanic in community college data (363,000 students).[5] In California Latinos are by far the largest population of those with limited English proficiency. They currently comprise 31.6% of the total population in California, and will represent (along with Asian-Americans) four of every five new Californians in the next decade.[6] Indeed, Latinos comprise 28% of California's current workforce of 15 million and are projected to be the largest worker group by the year 2025.[7]

The challenges to Latino access in education are rooted in both social/cultural and economic factors. The family structure is typically conservative and work-oriented. If the family is of limited financial means, the focus is on work. Language barriers may interfere with Latino children receiving the benefits of traditional outreach programs. Unfamiliarity with financial aid may further complicate the picture. Finally, when few or no family members have attended college or advanced vocational schools, there may be no role models or mentors to encourage children to consider options beyond high school or to

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[4] Statistics that follow come from *Conditions of Education in California, 1994-95*. University of California, Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education, 1995.

[5] California Community Colleges Management Information Services Statistical Library, data on enrollments, 1996-97 and 1998-99.

[6] Stephen Levy of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy.

[7] *Latinos and Economic Development in California*, California Research Bureau, June 1999.

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help them handle the practical challenges of actually enrolling in and attending college or vocational training.

These factors also contribute to a serious gap in access to technology. Since 1994, when the federal government started tracking these patterns, there is an ever-widening gap between white ownership or access to computers, and that for African-Americans and Latinos.[8] White households are still more than twice as likely (40.8%) to own a computer as an African-American (19.3%) or Latino (19.4%) household; this divide runs across all income levels. The result is that these groups are disadvantaged in access to the technology and, consequently, the technological skills, so vital to succeeding in a 21st century economy.

Students with disabilities are another significant "special population" under Perkins III. It is estimated that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) serves 49 million Americans including 4.5 million Californians with some 900 known disabilities. In 1996-97 there were 55,000 students with disabilities enrolled in California's community colleges. These students must be ensured equal opportunity to successfully complete vocational programs. Without supportive personnel, instructional aids, adaptive devices, and appropriate modifications to classrooms, curriculum, and equipment, these students may be denied the opportunity to receive training and become financially self-sufficient.

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[8] *Falling Through the Net II: New Data on the Digital Divide.* Washington, D.C.; United States Department of Commerce, 1999.

Part II. Recommendations

To assure compliance with the law and to address the needs identified above, the Advisory Committee for Special Populations recommends the following:

Recommendations for Meeting Accountability Requirements

1. The California Community College Partnership for Excellence will serve as a model for data collection. For each data category listed below, local entities must collect baseline data and establish numerical targets for each special population group consistent with their Partnership for Excellence goals.

- The percentage of each special population group that transfers
- The percentage of each special population group that receives degrees and certificates
- The percentage of each special population group that successfully completes vocational education courses
- The percentage of each special population group that enrolls in a basic skills course and then enrolls in a higher level course in the same area of study
- The percentage of males enrolled in vocational programs (by 4 digit TOP code) where fewer than 25% of the workers are male
- The percentage of females enrolled in vocational programs (by 4 digit TOP code) where fewer than 25% of the workers are female
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage data disaggregated by sex and special population group to assess progress in the labor force.

Each year the percentage change from the previous year must be reported to document progress. The state must evaluate local progress, and in instances where it is lacking, require greater support for special population students as specified in recommendation seven below.

2. For outcome/core indicators identified in the state plan, data must be reported by sex so that rates of achievement, completion, and placement for men and women can be compared.

Recommendations for Meeting State Activity Requirements

3. The state must review and evaluate local plans and hold local districts accountable for meeting local plan objectives. The state must set accountability standards and hold local agencies accountable for serving, and achieving meaningful progress for, all special population groups.

4. The state must identify and support exemplary programs for meeting the needs of special populations. Information about such programs will be disseminated to all local providers. The state must provide leadership in answering questions regarding which interventions work best in what settings and with what populations.

5. The state must provide professional development opportunities for local staff in order to equip providers with skills and strategies to serve special populations and to encourage and support nontraditional enrollment. Local staff should be given information about special population needs and strategies for meeting these needs. School personnel should be informed of nontraditional career options and the unique strategies which can be employed to encourage and support nontraditional enrollment. These strategies include targeted outreach and identification of the personal and social barriers to persevering in nontraditional careers. Professional development opportunities should also be provided which allow collaboration and information sharing among colleges.

Recommendations for Meeting Local Activity Requirements

6. Representatives of special population groups, and those with expertise in meeting the needs of special populations, must be involved in the development of the local plan.

7. Local educational entities must provide specific programs to encourage and support special populations and nontraditional enrollment. These programs must include:

Outreach and Recruitment.
Many special populations groups may not be aware of educational options. Special outreach to poor neighborhoods, barrios, and through churches and community-based organizations are needed. Outreach and recruitment at the community college level

should also include linkages with secondary institutions. Women and girls in high school, adult education, and regional occupational programs should be encouraged to continue their education, and in particular, to continue with math and science instruction so that they can transition to the community college and pursue training for high paying jobs. Women don't know that many nontraditional jobs are available to them, and that they are physically and practically capable of succeeding in them.

Career support.
This includes career counseling and exploration, field trips, mentoring, and exposure to all aspects of an industry. Local and regional labor market information, including starting wages and opportunities for advancement, should also be provided. Focusing on career paths is necessary to avoid "quick fixes" which might prepare special populations only for short term, low income jobs which will not move them out of poverty.

Academic support.
This includes advisement, tutoring, workshops, and special classes. Particular attention should be paid to skills identified in the SCANS report, including:

- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Identifying and allocating resources
- Acquiring and using information
- Understanding complex systems and inter-relationships
- Working with a variety of technologies

These are skills which cross over vocational areas and are necessary for lifelong workers who will undertake many different careers.

Financial support.
This includes assistance with child care, transportation, and books and materials. Many single parent and displaced homemaker students who are served by vocational education are not eligible for traditional means of financial support. Many constitute the "working poor" and are not eligible for CalWORKs and many are not able to attend school full time, making them ineligible for community college programs such as EOPS and CARE.

Access to Technology.
Particular attention must be paid to the access special populations have to technology. The vast majority of special populations students have not had access to technology (e.g., their families are unlikely to have computers in the home), and without technological skills they will not be able to compete. Support must be provided which includes special classes to upgrade skills, tutoring, and access to technology centers in the evenings and on weekends.

Staff development.
Local agencies must allow staff to participate in staff development opportunities provided by the state so that they become knowledgeable about special population needs, and strategies for serving special populations.

8. Local agencies must provide the state with a report on the services and activities it undertook to: (a) support special populations, (b) address the barriers faces by special populations. and (c) prepare students for nontraditional training and employment. This report must also provide the success rates for special population groups as identified in recommendation #1. Because states must provide the federal government with a quantifiable description of the progress special populations are making, it follows that all local entities receiving funds must report this information to the states.

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